DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 107 661 SP 009 288

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TITLE Sports Club Development--The '70'S Community Involvement.
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 4p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Athletics; *Clubs; College Students; *Community Involvement; Historical Reviews; Informal Leadership; *School Community Cooperation; *Undergraduate Students; Volunteers

ABSTRACT

A large-scale movement toward sports clubs is evolving in colleges and universities in response to widespread professionalism in varsity sports, limited sports opportunities available to highly skilled student athletes, and most importantly, substantial increases in the desire for sports participation by students in general, as a supplement to their academic involvement. (The document presents a historical review of the growth of sports clubs.) Increasing emphasis on community involvement has recently resulted in participation of greater numbers of interested community volunteers in sports club activities. This involvement has aided undergraduate sports club programs by providing impetus and initiative for forming new clubs, often by supplying leadership and expertise in a given sport. Expansion of the student-community sports club concept will be beneficial to all involved. (PB)

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SPORTS CLUB DEVELOPMENT - THE '70'S
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

by

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Widespread professionalism in varsity sports, limited sports opportunities available to the highly skilled student athlete, and perhaps most importantly, the substantial increases in the desire for sports participation by students in general as a supplement to their academic involvement, has produced a large scale movement in colleges and universities toward sports clubs. Most of the developing clubs have structures similar to European sports clubs which emphasize learning through self-government and sports programming, as well as the learning of new sports skills. A club may be defined as any group of individuals organized about a particular sport or activity for the purpose of furthering interest in sports participation and socialization. In practically every case within the United States, the formation and guidance of such clubs in the university or college setting has fallen under the jurisdiction of intramural-recreation department programs.

Starting from a brief historical review of the formation of sports clubs and the rapid growth which appears to have resulted from student activism during the '60's, a development of the increasing role that the community has assumed within campus sports clubs in the '70's is presented. A report of the preliminary survey data on sports clubs taken in 1974 is also included.

BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

Sports clubs have been in existence almost as long as formal intramural programs have been offered. Although somewhat obscured by rather hazy records, sports clubs have been identified in the literature as early as 1905. Very little formal writing exists concerning the development of sports clubs until the 1940's. Through the medium of the NIA Proceedings, we can gain some knowledge of sports clubs programming since World War II. Perhaps the best known early program was in operation at Purdue University where the emphasis was on providing an opportunity for all students to engage in "self-expression and self-involvement" recreational activities. One key aspect of the success of this program was the degree to which club members were allowed to be involved in much of the decision making pertaining to their club. Another positive note in the Purdue situation was the willingness of the administration to deal with the concepts which differentiate club sports from other phases of recreational sports programming. Other examples of rather successful early sports club programs

SP000 288

which have been publicized include the University of Tennessee, Michigan State University, and the University of Washington.

CLUB SPORTS PROLIFERATION

Among the reasons given for the main growth of sports clubs during the 1960's are the increase in the number of younger students who wished to continue their sports experiences (some of which had been at the varsity level in their undergraduate days) and an increasing number of interested undergraduates for whom no varsity team existed in that sport or who were unable to make the varsity team. Most important were a growing number of additional students who chose not to try out for the varsity team for personal reasons related to their conceptualization of what sport activities meant to them.

In 1969 a sports club survey was reported by Richard Jamerson, of North Carolina University, in the 72nd Annual NCPEAM Proceedings (p. #41), in which 78 "selected" educational institutions participated. Jamerson found that the number of sports clubs per institution ranged from 0 to 40, with most campuses showing 3 - 8 clubs. A total of 75 different sports with club status were represented. Of the 8 most popular club sports listed (soccer, karate, sailing skiing, judo, fencing, gymnastics, and rugby), six are individual sports and all eight fall within the currently accepted lifetime sports category. This emphasis on a wider choice of sports activities and participation in sports which can be continued throughout one's lifetime was also reflected in later surveys.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The '70's brought a slight change in emphasis which we felt in Minnesota, and which was indicated by Peter Berrafato, University of Illinois-Chicago Circle, in the NIA Proceedings in 1971 (p. #19): In short, educational institutions were beginning to be evaluated by the communities in which they resided. Existing programs utilizing community involvement grew and began to be emphasized by school administrators. Higher education, as Berrafato reported, "was becoming increasingly socialized, public-oriented, publicly aided, and public-policy conscious."

Within this framework, sports clubs enjoyed a distinct advantage and again proliferated. For years most clubs had been based on one, two, or a few graduate students, or interested faculty members for volunteer coaching, travel, scheduling, etc. Now, increasing emphasis on community involvement resulted in the participation of greater numbers of interested community volunteers in sports club activities, mostly at the advisor, coach, etc. level. Typical club structures included groups of men and women, generally from the professional community-at-large who banded together for purposes of team teaching, fund raising, and travel assistance for undergraduate teams. Some of these undergraduate teams chose to become the intercollegiate representatives of their schools.

At this point I'd like to digress a moment. . .we do not wish to undermine our main goal as intramural/recreation personnel: that is, providing sports

experiences for as many students as possible. However, we are investigating the exciting and many times surprising support of sports clubs by students, the community and the institution. It is this setting which permits the participating student to learn and perform administrative skills as well as develop advanced physical proficiency.

In a more recent survey (Mueller, Anderson, Juncker - Spring '74) a preliminary mailing was sent to 2,011 educational institutions in Canada and the United States to ascertain sports club proliferation and to locate coordinator addresses on the various campuses. Of the 1,022 returns received (51%) by February of this year, 77% (790) of the schools indicated sports clubs of some type on campus. There were an average of 6-to-8 clubs per institution with one school reporting over 60. If this sample is representative of the entire 2,011 schools, there may exist at this time over 10,000 sports clubs in North American educational institutions alone. A more extensive survey will be mailed this year.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

In review, community involvement has aided the undergraduate sports club program by providing the impetus and initiative for forming many new clubs, often by supplying leadership and expertise in a given sport. On the Minnesota campus, one volunteer instructor, a corporation president, turned out to be a former Hungarian national coach in the sport which he assisted. In addition, because community members are often more permanently located, year-to-year continuity in scheduling league competitions, fund-raising activities and transportation are more easily maintained.

Community volunteers have, by their involvement, come face to face with the problems and ramifications associated with professionalized varsity sports programs and intramural programs and have carried the differences in emphasis and philosophy back to the community. The effects are beginning to be felt at the administrative level by increased pressure from inside and outside the University on evaluation of sports programs for their educational and community service content. Funding distributions may soon begin to reflect these pressures!

Finally, faculty and community personnel now engaged as volunteers in the sports clubs at the University of Minnesota are beginning to think in terms of expansion of the sports club concept to lifetime community sports clubs programs, the hiring of full time coaches by the club and community, buildings associated with the educational institutions and park systems, and corporation-community funding for their programs. One club at Minnesota has hired a full time coach whose salary comes jointly from the University and the community. Indeed it will be most interesting and exciting, we believe, to follow the sports club movement these next few years.